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May 3, 2006

To: Mayor Michael D. Antonovich  
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Chair Pro Tem  
Supervisor Gloria Molina  
Supervisor Yvonne Burke  
Supervisor Don Knabe

From: David Sanders, Ph.D.  
Director

**DECEMBER 6, 2005 BOARD AGENDA ITEM #16 RE: MISSING CHILDREN  
MONTHLY UPDATE**

On December 6, 2005, your Board directed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to reconvene the Missing Children Task Force in order to continue in the identification and refinement of practices for the prevention and recovery of runaways; and to report back on a monthly basis with status updates on the following:

- I. Existing Countywide and community-specific services and programs, including the support that the DCFS Emergency Response Command Post can provide;
- II. Improved maintenance of the DCFS Missing Children Website;
- III. Enhancement of the DCFS Child Protection Hotline to provide specialized support for runaways;
- IV. Consideration of using the Permanency Partners Program (P-3), and;
- V. Addressing the issues that have been raised by youth who have been or are in care of the Department through corrections and modifications to the Department's policy.

**UPDATES**

- The third Runaway Task Force meeting was held on April 27, 2006. There were 36 members in attendance. Participants included community partners and stakeholders, emancipated and pre-emancipating youth, city and county law enforcement, probation, education, mental health, medical health, Commission for Children and Families and DCFS personnel. The agenda again, centered on



departmental and both the Law Enforcement and Youth Concerns Sub-committee updates, including specific recommendations to be discussed, considered and potentially implemented. The recommendations will be outlined presently in this report.

- The Law Enforcement Sub-committee was unable to meet prior to the April 27 Task Force meeting; however, they will be meeting in the month of May. They did report at the April 27 meeting that individual members of the committee have been working on identified action items.
- The Youth Concerns Sub-committee met on April 26, 2006. They informed the agenda via recommendations and topics for discussion. Their input will also be outlined in greater detail presently.

### **CURRENT STATUS**

#### **I. Existing County-wide and community-specific services and programs, including the support that the DCFS Emergency Response Command Post can provide:**

Work on the refinement of reporting runaway episodes in a timely and effective manner continues to be a major focus among DCFS and stakeholders. Currently, staff through sub-committee planning, have created and finalized an ARKS data input curriculum designed to train identified staff in each office who will be responsible for the daily data entry into the ARKS system. The target date for training to begin is June 1, 2006. The training will consist of instruction on appropriately entering key information on runaways and will also provide staff with updated procedures, which enhance the gathering and quantifying of statistical information obtained on runaway episodes for further use.

In addition, the sub-committee has finalized an updated minute order document, which consolidates information pertinent to runaway youth. That information is presently captured on three separate documents and the enhanced, consolidated document will support efforts to streamline existing reporting structures by reducing duplicative efforts. The document has been submitted to the Court and union representatives for approval. Once approved the document will be introduced to staff during the ARKS data entry training and through the DCFS Intranet.

To support the changes being made to address our runaways, we are reassessing those policies that deal with this population. To date, we have combined, added to, and even eliminated policies in an effort to update departmental practice and ensure consistent and uniform application. The Runaway Adolescent Program (RAP) staff have participated in training vis-à-vis provision of relevant resource information. RAP staff are in the process of compiling a profile on every runaway youth in the ARKS data base in an effort to collect vital information that will not only assist in finding the youth,



but also help to create a workable custom-made permanent placement plan for each youth, and provide valuable information on why youth runaway.

## **II. Improved maintenance of the DCFS Missing Children Website:**

DCFS continues to work diligently to improve maintenance of the Missing Children's Website, better known as ARKs. We continue to work aggressively at gathering data. DCFS Bureau of Information continues to assess and make necessary changes to the computer program to enhance the ARKS system, helping to make ARKS information more accurate and more accessible.

Additionally, the Law Enforcement Sub-committee will continue to explore several potential endeavors that would support maintenance of ARKs which include:

- Creating a shared data base for DCFS and law enforcement use; and
- Identifying a "go to" person/manager who has or is able to access information, statistics, etc., on runaway population within the Department.

(Please note attachment for current statistical information on DCFS runaway youth.)

## **III. Enhancement of the DCFS Child Protection Hotline to provide specialized support for runaways:**

The Emergency Response Command Post and the Hotline are working to interface with other law enforcement agencies across the nation by utilizing the National Runaway Hotline. By entering the names of our runaway youth into the national data base, we have the potential of recovering them in a more timely fashion and can draw on the expertise of other law enforcement agencies.

The Emergency Response Command Post and the Hotline have created logs to better track runaways that come through the front-end of our system and are able to reconnect them to their social workers and other resources much faster.

In addition, the Law Enforcement Sub-committee continues to work on shaping initial ideas and concepts, which were outlined in the April 3, 2006 report. The Sub-committee will report back at the next Task Force Meeting on June 22, 2006.

## **IV. Consideration of using the Permanency Partners Program (P-3):**

As outlined in the March 1, 2006 Board report, all runaways are now referred to P-3 staff. The P-3 staff have located a total of 107 runaway youth thus far. A follow-up report will be made to your Board upon any changes regarding this initiative.



**V. Addressing the issues that have been raised by youth who have been or are in care of the Department through corrections and modifications to the Department's policy.**

The Youth Concerns Sub-committee met and forwarded a number of recommendations to be discussed and sanctioned at the April 27 Task Force Meeting. The following proposals were submitted for additional consideration and consensus:

- Identify a means for tracking repeat runaways,
- Specialized training for caregivers regarding runaway youth; teenage behavior and crisis intervention,
- Placement mediation liaison to address reasons for runaway episodes with caregiver and youth,
- Flexibility in placement to allow for a more normal experience,
- Recruitment campaign for permanent placement options for teenagers,
- Develop communication protocol between DCFS, Community Care Licensing and the Ombudsman office,
- Ongoing training for DCFS staff and caregivers.

The proposals above were subject to a great deal of discussion. The reoccurring theme throughout the discussion was "training". It was felt that training was necessary for all of those involved with the runaway population. However before training could commence the committee agreed on the need to identify the content of the training curriculum. Prior to the June 22, 2006 Runaway Task Force Meeting, individual committee members agreed to the following tasks:

- Outline how the training would be done,
- Identify CWLA/DCFS training opportunities for caregivers,
- Obtain information on reasons youth runaway by talking directly to youth in placement,
- Enhance current runaway resources on ILP website,
- Convene a focus group with prior runaway youth.

**CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, DCFS remains committed to continuing it's exploration of complex issues and addressing the valid concerns that surround the runaway population. We will continue to employ departmental strategies and initiatives, with input from community stakeholders, which are designed to further enhance permanency. We thank you for your committed attention to this significant matter. We will continue to report on current, on-going and subsequent efforts involving our runaway youth in future Board reports.

Each Supervisor  
May 3, 2006  
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If you have any questions or need further assistance, please contact me, or your staff may contact Helen Berberian, Board Relations Manager at (213) 351-5530.

DS:AS:vm

Attachment

c: Chief Administrative Office  
County Counsel  
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors



**Abducted & Runaway Foster Childrens System (ARKS)**  
**DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON RUNAWAY CHILDREN SERVICED BY DCFS**  
**May 4, 2006**

Category	Totals / Subtotal	Percent	Comments
<b>Runaway DCFS Foster Children as reported in ARKS System</b>	419		
<b>Age</b>			
0-9 years old	0	0%	
10-13 years old	18	4%	
14-17 years old	401	96%	Majority are teenagers 14-17
	419		
<b>Gender</b>			
Female	309	74%	More girls than boys runaway
Male	110	26%	
	419		
<b>Ethnicity</b>			
American Indian	3	1%	
Black	119	28%	
Asian/Pacific Islander	7	2%	
Hispanic/Latino	239	57%	
White	51	12%	
	419		
<b>Placement Type</b>			
Foster Home	202	48%	
Group Home	124	30%	
Relative/Guardian Home	82	20%	
(Not Indicated)	11	3%	
	419		
<b>Location of CSW</b>			
SPA 1 Lancaster	9	2%	
SPA 1 Palmdale	15	4%	
SPA 2 North Hollywood	24	6%	
SPA 2 Santa Clarita	14	3%	
SPA 3 Glendora	37	9%	
SPA 3 Pasadena	19	5%	
SPA 3 Pomona	15	4%	
SPA 4 Metro North	42	10%	
SPA 5 West Los Angeles	12	3%	
SPA 6 Century	21	7%	
SPA 6 Compton	21	5%	
SPA 6 Hawthorne	9	2%	
SPA 6 Wateridge	43	10%	
SPA 7 Belvedere	41	10%	
SPA 7 Santa Fe Springs	27	6%	
SPA 8 Lakewood	30	7%	
SPA 8 Torrance	22	5%	
Adoptions	3	1%	
Specialized Programs	15	4%	
(Not Indicated)	0	0%	
	419		